

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication in paragraphs 2-6 of the Action that the prior art rejections previously of record are withdrawn.

Claims 1, 2, 4-19, 21, 23-29 and 33 are still pending in this application. Applicants have amended claim 1 to set forth the gap between the fiber reinforced sheets and to define the resin distribution medium more fully. These amendments find support in the specification at page 6, lines 13-16, and page 20, lines 10-14, respectively. Applicants have also amended claim 1 to correct an inadvertent typographical error, have changed “where” to “wherein” in many of the claims in recognition of conventional usage in claims and have otherwise improved the language of the claims. No new matter has been added by these amendments, which serve to overcome the rejection under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, in paragraph 8 of the Action, the withdrawal of which is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2, 4-19, 21, 23-29 and 33 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) on Kawanomoto in view of Niimura. The Examiner reads Kawanomoto as disclosing two or more sandwich structures comprising a pair of fiber reinforced sheets (which the Examiner finds to correspond to “drawings 4-8, #23 and #24,” with a rib structure (“drawings 7 and 8, #30 and #34-#38”) interposed between them which is integrally molded by a resin transfer molding. Although the Examiner finds that Kawanomoto fails to disclose the claimed layer containing a resin distribution medium between abutting end faces of the sandwich structure, she refers to Niimura as teaching that “it is old and well-known in the art to have a layer containing [a] resin distribution medium (drawing 4, #4) between abutting end faces and a fibre reinforced plastic connecting layer (drawing 4, #3) extending across the surfaces of both ends of the FRP layer.” This rejection and its supporting reasoning are respectfully traversed.

Although the Examiner is correct in identifying Kawanomoto’s inner panel 23 and outer panel 24 as being examples of parts of a sandwich structure, they do not form two or more sandwich structures as required by the claims in this application; the panels disclosed in

Kawanomoto form a single sandwich structure in each instance. The description of drawing 4 in paragraph [0027] of Kawanomoto likewise refers to but one sandwich structure made of the two FRP plates 23 and 24. Therefore, the basic premise of the rejection, that Kawanomoto discloses two or more sandwich structures butt joined in a widthwise direction, is incorrect and the rejection should be withdrawn on this ground alone.

To expedite prosecution applicants will also explain why Niimura does not provide the teachings for which the examiner cited it as overcoming the deficiencies of Kawanomoto that the Examiner recognized. First, applicants note that the Examiner must have misspoken in the Action, as #3 and #4 do not appear in drawing 4; they appear in drawing 3. Second, #3 does not extend between end faces of the adjacent sheets; it extends over the outer surface of a top sheet. #4 is made of resin putty and is not in any way a resin distribution medium or the claimed body having resin flow channels formed therein with a fibre reinforced layer between the end faces of the abutted sandwich structures.

Accordingly, the rejection of claims 1, 2, 4-19, 21, 23-29 and 33 should be withdrawn because neither reference provides the teachings for which it is cited.¹

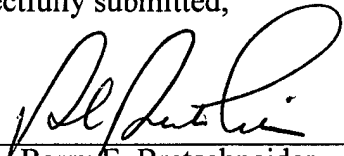
Early action allowing claims 1, 2, 4-19, 21, 23-29 and 33 is solicited.

¹ Applicants do not have to respond to the Examiner's various contentions regarding the rejected dependent claims because of these deficiencies of the cited references, but applicants note that neither Kawanomoto nor Niimura provides any motivation to modify or optimize any of the parameters set forth in the dependent claims that the Examiner considers to be matters of routine optimization.

In the event that the transmittal letter is separated from this document and the Patent & Trademark Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicants petition for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to **Deposit Account No. 03-1952**, referencing 360842007000.

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